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Rep. Henry Waxman Retirement: 'Big Loss' for Hollywood

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Henry Waxman

The Congressman, who has served 40 years in the House of Representatives, announced Thursday that he would not seek re-election in the fall.

When Westside congressman **Henry Waxman** retires later this year, the entertainment industry will lose one of its firmest friends and Hollywood's progressive Democrats will have to say goodbye to one of the few remaining liberal lions in the House.

Taken together with last fall's primary defeat of San Fernando Valley congressmen and longtime Waxman ally **Howard Berman**, the Westside representative's announcement Thursday that he will retire at age 74 after 40 years in office means that Hollywood has lost not simply a steadfast and effective champion of its issues, but also a lawmaker of deep experience and seniority. The strong environmentalists in the entertainment industry also will suffer the loss of another

of the chamber's leading liberals and reliable green votes. Bay Area representative **George Miller**, who along with Waxman is the last of the so-called "Watergate babies" elected to the House in 1975, also will retire.

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"Henry's departure is a major loss for the country, let alone the city," said Hollywood political consultant **Donna Bojarsky**. "His main focus wasn't the business per se, but he was a virtual hero on all the issues this community cares about and fights for -- whether it's clean air, clean water, fighting for civil and economic rights for all, health care and generic drug

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availability. Even his incredibly singular political victory over Michigan's uber powerful Rep. **John Dingell**, for example, ensured better environment and air for the entire country."

Bojarsky added: "His seniority and respect in Congress meant that his positions were heard and acted upon on the highest level, with hometown Hollywood having a great conduit in him. Bottom line: We lose a huge leader."

Waxman, moreover, literally numbers many of Hollywood's leading lights among his Beverly Hills and West Los Angeles constituents. "I am grateful for the support of my constituents, who have entrusted me to represent them," Waxman said in statement released Thursday, "and encouraged me to become a leader on national and international issues. I am grateful for my supporters and allies, who have worked side by side with me to fight for issues of mutual concern, whether it be for health, environmental protection, women's and gay rights or strengthening the ties between the United States and our most important ally, the State of Israel."

"When I was first elected to the House -- in 1974 -- I hoped to be able to serve 20 years and leave a mark on some important issues. I never imagined I would be in the House for 40 years and be able to advance every issue I care deeply about."

Waxman said, "There are elements of Congress today that I do not like. I abhor the extremism of the Tea Party Republicans. I am embarrassed that the greatest legislative body in the world too often operates in a partisan intellectual vacuum, denying science, refusing to listen to experts and ignoring facts. But I am not leaving out of frustration with Congress." Nor, he said, should his retirement be interpreted as an admission that the Democrats have no chance of regaining control of the House. Waxman, like Miller, is one of minority leader **Nancy Pelosi's** closest advisors and allies.

"We're losing somebody with 40 years of seniority," said veteran Democratic political consultant **Rick Taylor**. "It's going to be a big loss because we're losing a powerful force in a guy who knows how to make things happen."

In a statement, Rep. **Adam Schiff** (D-Burbank) said that Waxman "will go down as one of the giants of Congress -- smart, strategically savvy, dogged at oversight and a power to be reckoned with -- his hand can be seen in almost every domestic achievement of the last few decades. Along with the departure of Howard Berman last year, California and indeed the whole Congress, have lost two of the strongest pillars of policy-making in the domestic and foreign policy realms."

President **Barack Obama** released a statement Thursday afternoon thanking Waxman for his years of service.

"Thanks to Henry's leadership, Americans breath cleaner air, drink cleaner water, eat safer food, purchase safer products, and, finally, have access to quality, affordable healthcare," Obama said. "Today, he continues to advocate tirelessly on behalf of Los Angeles and California as he leads efforts to address a changing climate and make sure every American has the economic security that comes with health insurance. Henry will leave behind a legacy as an extraordinary public servant and one of the most accomplished legislators of his or any era."

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MPAA chief **Chris Dodd**, meanwhile, wished Waxman "nothing but the best in his future endeavors."

"Congressman Waxman and I were elected together in 1974 and I had the distinct privilege of serving alongside him for years," Dodd said. "I saw firsthand what a tireless advocate he was not only for the people of Southern California, but for consumers all across the country. I congratulate him on an outstanding career rooted in exceptional and effective leadership."